



Fort Leonard Wood gets high marks for quality of life

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FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. (Army News Service, Aug. 21, 2006) – A recent ranking of 577 small cities in the nation by an online business journal confirmed what many people who live in this area already knew – Fort Leonard Wood is a good place to call home.

“The Soldiers who serve here know this is a wonderful place to live,” said Maj. Gen. Randal Castro, Maneuver Support Center and Fort Leonard Wood Commanding General. “We have a great team of teams both on and off the installation, and we work together like no where else I’ve ever been assigned.

“The combination of a fantastic mission and a wonderful quality of life, particularly outdoor activities, makes this jewel of the Ozarks such a great place to live, work and raise a family.”

Recently, 2,000 homes were turned over to Residential Communities Initiative for management. RCI is a commercial partner that will privatize government housing with the goal of completely rebuilding the housing and neighborhoods on Fort Leonard Wood.

But, it’s not just the new housing, which is arguably among the best here or anywhere else, but affordable housing off-post as well. Servicemembers will soon have choices to live in the new on post housing boasting modern, vinyl-sided homes with large garages, spacious bedrooms, baths and closets or invest in premium quality homes in the community.

“It comes as no surprise that our area ranked 51st. The Fort Leonard Wood region has much to offer to its residents and business owners. Community leaders have worked very hard for the last several years to create a climate that is beneficial to prospective residents and businesses alike,” said Andy Thiem, Pulaski County Tourism Bureau, executive director.

“The highly educated workforce in our area is indicative of the quality of educational opportunities that exist in our local universities and from the families of those stationed at FLW,” Thiem said.

Centrally located to Springfield, Jefferson City, Columbia and St. Louis enables residents quick and easy access to sports venues, arts and entertainment, shopping and dining.

“Even our local businesses offer a diverse selection of activities to enjoy, and our natural resources are some of the most attractive in the state,” Thiem said. “Sometimes we take for granted what we have, and I think these rankings are a great reminder of the quality of living the Fort Leonard Wood region has to offer.”

With programs like Experience Fort Leonard Wood, there is no comparison to Fort Leonard Wood according to Megan O’Donoghue, Fort Leonard Wood Directorate of Morale, Welfare and Recreation, marketing director.

“The ‘Experience Fort Leonard Wood Campaign’ is to raise awareness about what Fort Leonard Wood has to offer not only to military personnel but also to our surrounding communities who give so much support to our servicemembers,” O’Donoghue said. “Fort Leonard Wood is an outdoor paradise — a great place to live, work, raise your family and offers recreational activities for young and old alike.”

‘Experience Fort Leonard Wood’ offers a variety of activities to include Lake of the Ozarks Recreational Area featuring cabins, camping, recreational vehicle hook ups, boating, fishing, swimming, water and jet skiing, tournaments and other outdoor activities.

Located 50 miles northwest of Fort Leonard Wood, LORA is minutes from local attractions: state parks, water parks, amusement parks, antiques and gift shops, fine dining and night clubs and golf courses. LORA has conference rooms for up to 150 people, two conference rooms are available on site, and each will hold up to 75 people.

Fort Leonard Wood offers many services for outdoor enthusiasts at the conveniently-located Sportsmen’s Center. The center offers float trips, equipment rental, skeet and trap range and instruction, archery ranges, and paintball. Fort Leonard Wood features state-of-the-art facilities to include one of the best sports complex in the Midwest, an 18-hole golf course rated the top 100 courses in a tri-state area and indoor and outdoor pools.

Coming into the rankings in the top 10 percent, the post was compared against communities of 10,000 to 50,000 across the nation in 12 categories by Bizjournals.com, an online publication of American City Business Journals.

The goal of the study was to identify American’s most desirable small cities. Cities with strong economies, light commuting traffic, moderate costs of living, higher educated adults and access to larger metropolitan cities scored highest on the chart with the top ten cities being deemed “Dreamtowns,” said an American City Business Journals official.

At 51 on the list of 577 micropolitan areas, Fort Leonard Wood was measured in the following categories: population growth, income growth, per capita income, small business growth, small business concentration, management or professional jobs, ease of commuting, affordable housing, taxation, college degrees, percent of adults 25 or older with bachelor’s degrees, percent of advanced degrees and proximity to a larger city, officials said.

According to the Bizjournals Web site, each area was compared against the average of all 577 micropolitan areas. Other area communities were also included in the findings with Rolla, Mo., coming in at 13 and Lebanon ranked 282.

“Fort Leonard Wood has a unique relationship with its surrounding communities. We work together and play together to provide an affordable cost of living, outstanding schools and jobs, a variety of recreation activities and continuing our strong economic growth,” said Cecilia Murray, Waynesville-St. Robert Chamber of Commerce, executive director. “This is a great place to call home.”

Other similar-sized military communities on the list included Fort Riley, Kan., at number 23, and Fort Polk, La., was rated at number 253 on the list. Larger installations, such as Fort Bragg, N.C., or Fort Hood, Texas, were part of metropolitan areas, which have a population greater than 50,000 and are not rated on the Bizjournals’ Dreamtown list.

(Story provided by Ft. Leonard Wood PAO)